

Preface

Literal Lenses: Book 2 stands on its own. Book 1 helps by examining a number of Bible passages with Literal Lenses, and by giving readers practice in wrapping their minds around important Bible subjects using Literal Lenses.

Book 2 continues the literal approach by examining other Bible passages that are difficult to take literally. Isaiah 45:7 with Genesis 2:17 and several verses from Genesis 1 are God's Own statements, and they answer today's most difficult questions, yet God's Bible-believing servants do not see that. These passages describe the foundational parts of our God-created reality, but we must believe them literally to see that. (Book 1 does not linger on these fundamental parts of our God-created reality.)

In explaining these Bible passages, Book 2 summarizes some Book 1 subjects in the light of the God-created reality. Subjects such as Jonah, Job, God's direction, and the two-solution gospel are seen even more clearly in this light.

This book, Book 2, describes two foundational parts of reality. Although God declares each of them in the Bible, no one has taught them. Therefore, we must think clearly – this is not a casual read. Average thinkers can know why the Good God exists with evil, and why He neither prevents evil from striking our world nor fixes the problems it causes ... but God's revelation has not been believed.

This is not an easy read because our teachers have consistently taught us wrong. Religious or secular, all humans have defined evil as it exists in our world since Adam's sin, which is only part of the evil that God created. Our God-created reality has evil, but God's revealed evil is different than people have thought. A part of the answer is that evil existed in the perfect Garden of Eden before Adam sinned. God's Theodicy – His explanation of how evil could exist on earth if God is Good and Almighty – is a complete answer that is fully satisfying.

The answer has always been complete and accessible to limited humans; both Isaiah 45:7 and Genesis describe a wisdom hidden in God. For 1000s of years God's people could have seen reality. Bible believers could have explained the evil that exists in this world that God created; we only needed to take God at His Word, and to define evil as He created it before Adam's sin. While unbelievers do not often sense a problem with evil – it just is, and they deal with it as it happens – they make a fatal error when they reject the Creator.

The passages in which God describes the created reality help us see:

1. evil's description, origin, definition, and responsibilities (Chapter 1), and
2. the solution to an 'unsolvable' problem of theology (Chapter 3).

The theology problem must be solved too because the good God of the Bible does not stop evil, however defined, from hitting the earth ... and we wonder: Why not? Is He not able? Does He not care? There are many questions.

God's words are not difficult; they are not technical; they do not require complex philosophy or metaphysics, which few could follow. His words will make sense rationally, spiritually, and practically to average thinkers. When we see God's created reality, our questions change from difficult theoretical or theological ones to practical ones, such as, "Now that I know what evil is and why it is here, what can I do about it?" Evil is neither mystical, nor unstoppable.

Yet, God's description of reality in the Bible is a new idea. While it is not complex or technical, considering a reality in which evil need not be a problem will require reorientation. Accepting what God literally says, means accepting two truths, each of which seem to contradict a part of His character ... they do not.

In addition, God's revealed reality will not fit with what is currently understood – it will not fit with anyone's perspective of evil, or of God's activity, whether believer or not. Believing this revelation of God was my challenge ... and now it is yours. Do not insist on fitting God's reality – described in this book – into what you already know. Doing that, you will never understand. You must change some of your deeply ingrained ideas about the realities of evil, and about the reality God created. Be alert to God's Word; God's Word plainly declares the answers we seek.

The Bible and God and religion have been entirely rejected by those 'in the know,' especially since the mid-19th century. Yet, no religion or notable believer has accepted these parts of the Bible literally, so the Bible has never been rejected on its own merits, and neither has the Creator. All rejections were oppositions to religions attempting to enforce different parts of the Bible. Religious teachings included ideas that were not acceptable to earthly thinkers. Religions also taught ideas that were in conflict with the truth and reality often described well by scientists, philosophers, educators, researchers, and others. Believing the Bible literally would have helped the accuracy of their descriptions of reality. Believers must see God's created reality accurately. This book is not promoting a religion – it is promoting the Bible. Believed literally, the Bible describes some unheard parts of reality, which answer or resolve the problems we thought we had with a good God co-existing with evil.

About the Author

A friend from decades ago and I are reconnecting. He read Book 1, and graciously said that he appreciated its information about the author – examples from my early years in Chapter 22 and other details shared after that – but said that he would have liked to have known those details before he read the book. Therefore, information about the author largely from an appendix of Book 1 is shared here.

I was raised in a supportive middle-class home, neighborhood, school, and church in a single small city. The area culture was Protestant with a strong work ethic. At church, I learned to appreciate the Bible. I graduated college with a Math / Science teaching degree, but took work as a factory laborer. I was not driven and did not take all the responsibility I could have. Moving from home, I transitioned to work as a computer programmer in large cities.

Returning home, I gradually began writing projects. It was never my goal to write, but, as God directed, I sought to fill in details of what I saw to be rarely communicated Biblical teachings, and of Biblical ideas that I have worked to understand, including some ambitious subjects like the origin and nature of evil. I believe that God's revelation in the Bible moves us to answers and explanations beyond what we have realized.

About my perspective: I am not widely read, but various men have captured my interest over the years, beginning with Oswald Chambers during my college years. Watchman Nee, Frances Schaeffer, and many Charles Spurgeon sermons gained my interest as well. I was drawn to Puritan authors and theologians, but did not read them much. More recently, the difficult theology of P.T. Forsyth, whom Oswald Chambers quoted, caught my attention; I was amazed by the way P.T. Forsyth brought every issue, every subject, every personal and world conundrum to the cross of Christ for its resolution. It spurred in me a desire to learn more about the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified. I thought that I would promote P.T. Forsyth to make his deeply theological works more widely accessible, but God gave me new objectives.

Now I listen to and watch presentations, processing the thoughts of others, hoping to shape my perspective Biblically. Many of those are secular courses on history, philosophy, and science that contain good information, with many clear facts and intelligent ideas, but contain also disparate human explanations, often using personal experience, even offering guesses and scattered speculations, which, to me, need a Biblical basis for the facts to fit and to make proper sense.

Through the years, I have listened to radio, TV, and preaching and teaching from the internet and podcasts by those who believe the Bible to be entirely true, inspired, and accurate. Many messages, from little known to exalted ministers/teachers, challenge me ... especially when they express Biblical teachings different from mine. So I ask, "What does the Bible say?" Big subjects such as Law and Grace, good and evil, sovereignty and responsibility, sin and forgiveness, and more grab my attention and drive me to the Bible.

The bottom line is that I want the perspective I share to match the Bible's, as do most Biblical teachers and writers who have helped me. In pursuing that, I have honestly considered many varied points of view, which have broadened my knowledge, deepened my understanding, and aided my expression of the truths of the literal Bible. Bible reading and memory inform me directly of the Bible's perspective. To claim even to want God's perspective seems presumptuous, but that too is my desire and I seek Him for greater understanding, asking the Holy Spirit to guide me into all truth as Jesus declared He would.

Specifically about Book 2, it took me about two decades to understand how the Bible, believed literally, shows God's created reality. Then, from 2018, organizing the subjects and expressions in Books 1 and 2 took another three years ... and I continue to learn and update. Exchanging established Bible-based understandings for these new literal understandings was hard work. I continue to work for clear and consistent Biblical understandings and expressions. Readers can be thankful that they will not need multiple years to understand God's new-to-us descriptions of His created reality.

(The "Being Bolder" menu option on www.literallenses.org/book2 expands on this more directly.)

A friend is graciously enduring a labored reading of Book 2. We each believe and read the Bible literally. Yet, on Day 6 of Genesis 1, we disagree: he sees one of God's acts to hold only for redeemed believers in Christ. The eight chapters of Book 2: Part 2 describe this act. Reading carefully and critically, my friend sees necessary passages left out or not explained 'properly'. (Later chapters of Part 2 build upon and explain most ideas in its earlier chapters ... other explanations will be on the website.) While having much to learn, I believe that God's act in Genesis 1 has always applied to all. My friend's labored reading demonstrates that ideas in Book 2 will not fit with what a reader currently knows. I appreciate my friend's honesty; we discuss his difficulties in Part 2 ... but readers who begin to struggle in Part 2 should consider a non-stop read. They can then re-read those eight chapters having a more complete knowledge of God's created reality described there, which again took 20+ years for me to process and organize.

Introduction

The human Problem of Evil is solved! God revealed the solution!

Yet, everyone has wondered how a good God and bad evil could co-exist.

With that, everyone also wondered how a good and powerful God could allow evil upon the earth.

Two non-solutions are embraced: #1) It is impossible, and #2) I do not know.

Unbelievers embrace #1 and reject any good and powerful God, as having anything to do with this earth. From atheist to agnostic, with varying levels of intensity or focus, these declare that no God is needed or desirable in our world. Believers embrace #2 and see both evil and God on the earth, but usually yield to the Creator, Who alone knows how and why they exist together. They live in a world making no sense, as victims either forced by God or privileged under God.

The single assumption that makes either non-solution possible, and makes any other answer impossible is the assumption that God is in control, that the Almighty Creator of our world must have direct control over all the earth.

There are actually two problems of evil:

1. The **macro-problem**: How can God co-exist with evil?
2. The **micro-problem**: Why did 'that' particular evil event happen?

God reveals the answer to the **macro-problem**, but not to the **micro-problem(s)**, those 'constant' events that trouble our lives. Yet the **micro-problem(s)** give God's trusting people occasion to commit their individual steps to Him.

God reveals the answer to various expressions of the **macro-problem** ... it is the subject of Part 1 of this book. God's answer, in Genesis 1 and 2, includes the origin of evil and the 3-part definition of evil. God's answer must also include a structure of authority different from the assumption above; God cannot have direct control over the earth, or we will not know why evil exists on the earth.

Part 2 (Chapters 3-10) describe why God does not independently stop evil from hitting the earth. If God could, but does not, stop evil from hitting the earth, then we have no answer that satisfies. So God, establishes in Genesis 1, an earthly authority structure that completes His answer to the various expressions of the **macro-problem** in a way we humans can understand.

Part 1 of this book (Chapters 1 – 2) gives the foundational definition of evil. It describes the reality in which the Good God has co-existed with evil since He spoke to Adam. Our next questions move us forward: "Why does God let evil happen?" and "What will help me live with less experience and influence of evil?"

Part 1 requires Isaiah 45:7, and Genesis 1-3 understood as literally and historically true. Foundational facts – Bible facts – declare the origin of evil, define evil, and explain its impact. There is no need to categorize, describe, or explain those ‘undesirable’ situations, which are all Post-Fall.

The Bible’s definition and description

- ♦ fit the real world God created before Adam’s sin, and
- ♦ ring true inside, and
- ♦ are accessible to average thinkers.

Part 2 of this book (Chapters 3 – 10) describes and expounds upon a reality that God speaks in Genesis 1, a reality that resolves the ‘unresolvable’ theological issue of God’s Sovereignty with Human Responsibility. These two truths have been thought to be parallel ... never coming together ... understood only by God. They are, however, ‘resolvable’ when we believe the Bible literally.

God’s words in Genesis 1 ‘resolve’ them; His words are confirmed throughout the Bible, and clearly describe this part of reality, which affects all of life on the earth. This literal view involves all of life, and it can be difficult, therefore the eight chapters of Part 2 describe many facets of this reality.

Part 3 of this book (chapters 11 – 16) is largely application. Seeing God’s created reality, described in Parts 1 and 2, not only solves long-standing philosophical and theological problems, but it also provides practical answers for life in our God-created world. We will deal with evil in our worlds when we embrace His Bible-revealed reality literally, and then act upon it. This enables us to live victoriously in this world so impacted by evil. God provides His people abilities and resources both to fix the evil in our world and to be protected from evil.

This book will offer some brief ‘side explanations. Those in Chapter 1 describe the Bible as sufficient, and why we do not need to delve into most technical concepts and ideas: philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, etc. To understand God’s solution to the problem of evil is not technical for those believing what God literally said; the explanation should be easy to understand, and it should satisfy.

God’s revelation in the Bible holds the answers we need, but it has never been believed entirely literally. Through the centuries of the Bible being translated, printed and accessible to an ever growing portion of the planet, people and religions have embraced the parts of the Bible that are special to them. Literal readings have been subjugated under accepted theology, dominant science, and even under common experience. In this book, every verse is read literally; first is Isaiah 45:7, one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to believe literally.

PART 1:

Evil: its Definition
& its Responsibilities

Chapter 1:

The Origin and Definition of Evil

Our Reality: Evil exists in our world and we wonder why.

We all experience evil, and at times choose it. Most of us hate evil, but a few embrace it and even call it good. Others believe that there is no real standard: what is called “evil” is no better and no worse than what is called “good”.

Why does evil exist? and How is it defined? and How is God involved? Answers are clear in the Bible, when it is read and received as literally true, including why a Good God apparently does nothing about evil, and does not seem to care about the tragic ways it strikes us and our world. Parts 1 and 2 of this book describe answers to these important questions.

The Biblical Reality: Evil exists and we know why: God created it.

God Himself says: “*I create evil*” in Isaiah 45:7. Here is the entire verse, more precisely from the Hebrew: “*Making light and creating darkness; making peace and creating evil. I Yahweh doing every one of these things.*”

Notice how God immediately emphasized that He Himself is doing these things; no one can dismiss this as the message or opinion of a human prophet.

God’s creation of evil is not figurative language. The Hebrew verb “to create” is used six times in Isaiah 45, three of which refer to events of God’s initial creation of our universe, the earth, and all life, described in Genesis 1, which has five uses of the same verb “to create”. Both God’s activity in Genesis 1 and His declarations in Isaiah 45 are literally true. If we start by believing that the good God creates evil, we can think of evil more foundationally ... instead of thinking of evil’s manifestations, such as ‘undesirable events’ that corrupt our world.

Believing Isaiah 45:7, we know with certainty the ‘origin of evil’: God created it. Even so, the intuition may shout: “No! How could the Good God create evil, which is not good? That must be rejected as logical nonsense, even if the Bible literally says it.” Yet, not believing Isaiah 45:7 is the major reason we do not understand the evil in our world. We must define evil as God created it in the perfect world. The Good God, Who created evil is not responsible for any evil effect.

Religious people object to this truth for various reasons, including one or more from the following list:

- ♦ Some who believe the Bible literally do not believe these words at all. They say that “create” really means ‘allow,’ and some even erase the text,

declaring: "God doesn't create evil." It is more palatable for them to say that God 'allows' evil ... a statement which reflects the incorrect assumption that He could prevent it, if He desired. The error in this assumption will be addressed, especially in Part 2.

- ♦ Others interpret the word "evil" to mean "calamity". They believe the Bible and prefer to say that God creates calamitous events. This interpretation honors the Bible since the Hebrew word for "evil" is widely used, and its broad meaning includes "calamity" and many similar words, as well as many synonyms for evil. My response is yes and yes. I have a 'both – and' approach to the truths of the Bible, and am confident that God creates both evil and calamity and everything else meant by this Hebrew word.

If we narrow the meaning of the Hebrew word so that it makes sense to us, or if we try to fit God's words to our understanding, we lose meaning. Since its message is clear just as written, we take a deep breath and believe what it says: Isaiah 45:7 is true, and it is good ... as we shall see.

- ♦ Some separate "evil" and "calamity," and deny that God created "evil". They say that "calamity" describes God's necessary judgments upon sin, upon sinners, and upon the evil in the world.
- ♦ Some focus on another part of creation, so God is not creating evil. This could be His creation of people in His image, which includes free choice, which must include the freedom to sin or do evil, which means that God created people with the potential to do evil, without creating them evil.

This idea slanders God, because God would then be responsible for the evil that humans do. God did create humans with the freedom to choose from options, but this is not the entire definition of the evil that God created.

- ♦ Some say that evil describes the absence of God or of the good. Since all that God created is good, what He did not create is 'not good' or evil. This could be a person forgetting the good graces of God, or rejecting a good potential or being deprived of good (privation), etc. An evil person embraces what is 'not good'.
- ♦ Some refuse to accept that an entirely Good and Holy God would ever create evil or have responsibility for it, either as evil or as calamity.
- ♦ Many put the full responsibility and blame for evil's origin and continued existence upon Adam and/or upon fallen humans and/or upon Lucifer.

Objections such as these can be based on, or express, certain truths of scripture. We should all believe all Biblical truths, but not necessarily as taught, and not necessarily all parts of the doctrine or worldview attached to the teaching or to the teacher. When the Bible expresses it, we receive it just as written. No

explanation of evil will satisfy us if we try to 'explain away' God's declaration that He is the One creating evil.

Reading the Bible Literally:

As an aside, most do not know the Bible well enough to believe it literally. Some people, and religions, latch onto one or several passages or truths and do not realize other contexts or truths that are also literally true. For example, some read Genesis 1:28 literally and oppress people and abuse the environment while dominating and subduing as the verse says. They forget or do not know that God opposes the oppressor, and that His people produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The whole Bible is literally true, but it includes many facets of God's truth; it is one reason we listen to and learn from the studied perspectives of others. Primarily, though, we learn God's entire Biblical revelation well, and submit to all of it. It is good to hold interpretations loosely, even literal statements, because we always need to learn more.

(Book 1: Appendix 2 describes ways that I read and believe the Bible completely literally. These ways are summarized on www.literallenses.org)

It is difficult for Bible believers to settle on an explanation of Isaiah 45:7, especially for those who assume that God, if He created or originated it, would be responsible for the evil we see in our world. The assumption is wrong. Since the Bible declares them, we believe all of these seemingly contradictory truths.

We must believe all three ...

1. God is entirely good. (Psalm 100:5 and many others.)
2. Isaiah 45:7 is true: God is the "*One creating evil.*"
3. God is not responsible for any of the evil in our world. From Adam's sin in Genesis 3 to God's judgment in II Corinthians 5:10, and in many other passages, people are held responsible, not God.

We do not need to understand ... we need to believe all of these.

The second truth does not make sense. Few believe it, but understanding it is harder still ... yet it is God's declaration. Evil is impossible to explain unless we believe God, Who declares that He is the One creating evil. We cannot reject God's declaration, and expect to understand His truth. When we believe all three declarations above, God's truth about evil will be easily accessible to us.

It is Biblical and true that the entirely Good God creates evil.

Even if it makes no natural sense, we can and we must believe it.

We do not abandon thinking; nor do we give up on finding a solution. Our love for logic and reason is good, and these are good tools to help us make sense of